

# LA Metro board OKs new light-rail line from Artesia to Union Station

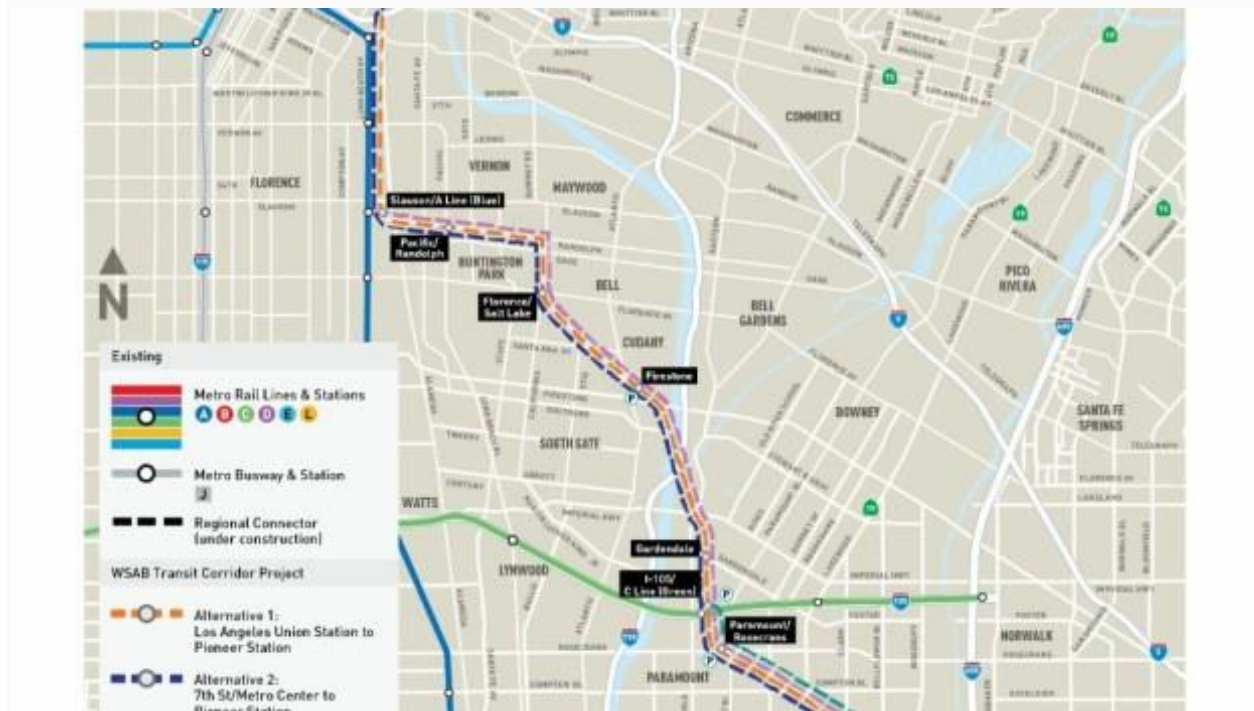
The 19.3-mile West Santa Ana Branch would cost \$8.5 billion

By [STEVE SCAUZILLO](#) | [sscauzillo@scng.com](mailto:sscauzillo@scng.com) | San Gabriel Valley Tribune  
PUBLISHED: January 27, 2022 at 5:39 p.m. | UPDATED: January 27, 2022 at 5:40 p.m.

The [LA Metro](#) Board approved a 19.3-mile light-rail line on Thursday, Jan. 27, that would take riders from Artesia to downtown Los Angeles, a first-of-its-kind transit project serving lower income communities in southeast LA County.

The \$8.5 billion train project would follow the old right of way once used by the Pacific Electric line's Santa Ana route in LA County and is called the West Santa Ana Branch line. The line is approved to run through the cities of Artesia, Cerritos, Bellflower, Paramount, Downey, South Gate, Cudahy, Bell, Huntington Park, Vernon, unincorporated Florence-Graham and eventually, into Union Station in downtown Los Angeles.

"We have been working on this project for well over 20 years. This is an exciting day," said Ali Sajjad Taj, a member of the Artesia City Council.



The LA Metro Board of Directors on Jan. 27, 2022, approved the route of the West Santa Ana Branch light-rail line. The board chose an option that goes to the Slauson Station of the A Line. But the board voted to study and pursue planning and design for a second phase that would go to Union Station in Downtown Los Angeles. (Image courtesy LA Metro)

The project alignment was approved in two phases. The first phase, a 14.8-mile segment, would run from the Artesia/Cerritos area, slanting northwest over the 105 Freeway, then northward zigzagging east and west of the 710 Freeway, veering west to the Slauson Avenue [A Line](#) Station (formerly [Blue Line](#)) in the Florence-Firestone area.

Top Articles.

Under the first phase, riders would have to disembark and transfer to the A Line to go north into downtown Los Angeles. This alignment was challenged by the LA Metro's board, which said this would not complete the project.

The board overruled the LA Metro staff by unanimously authorizing that the new line must continue via rail into the Arts District, Little Tokyo and Union Station, a 4.5-mile second phase. Neighborhood groups from Little Tokyo called for the train to be underground in that segment, an option being studied for the second phase and one that could drive up the cost.

More than 23 elected officials from southeast LA County cities called into the virtual LA Metro board meeting Thursday to support the full project that would provide a one-seat ride from Artesia into Union Station.

Ali Saleh, a Bell City Council member and Gateway Cities Council of Governments vice chair, said the project is historic for his city and nearby cities consisting mainly of majority-minority populations. Within the corridor of the proposed light-rail train, about 44% of individuals and families live below the poverty line and 18% of the households do not have access to a car, LA Metro reported.

"This project is very significant for all the cities in the corridor," Saleh said at a rally held before the board's vote. "It is historic and for the underserved communities here."

"Today is about equity for cities that have been waiting decades for transportation opportunities," said Huntington Park City Councilmember Karina Macias.

Many supporters complained about the far-off completion dates for the massive project.

The first phase is not scheduled to break ground until 2023 with completion in about 10 years, in 2033, said Meghna Khanna, LA Metro project manager. The second phase will take at least another 10 years before funding and right-of-way purchases are secured and design plans and construction are completed, most likely in 2043 or later, the agency reported.

"I'd like to ride it in my lifetime," said LA County Supervisor Janice Hahn, who sits on the LA Metro board.

"We've been talking about this project for 30 years," Hahn said. "Our community should not have to wait another 30 years."

Rep. Linda Sanchez, D-Norwalk, said the West Santa Ana rail project "is well positioned for federal funding."

In the first phase, the project would include 12.2 miles of at-grade tracks; 2.6 miles of aerial tracks; nine stations; five park-and-ride facilities; bridge crossings over the Los Angeles River, Rio Hondo Channel and San Gabriel River; and four freeway bridges over the 91, 605, 105 and 710 freeways.

The LA Metro board voted to move up the completion dates of the two phases.

But that would require accessing more funding at a quicker pace. The project is partially funded through [Measure M](#), a half-cent sales tax collected in the county for transportation. But LA Metro only has about \$2 billion set aside and expects to receive another \$2 billion from the state, Hahn said.